

What is claimed is:

1. A cam mechanism for a lens barrel, the mechanism comprising:

a cam ring comprising a cam groove which is open at
5 one end; and

a support ring supporting an imaging component, the support ring having a cam follower engageable with said at least one cam groove and movable therein towards and away from said open end wherein the support ring is movable
10 along an axis relative to the cam ring without rotation;

wherein said cam ring and said support ring each have respective guide surfaces engageable with each other when the cam follower is moved in the region of said open end and shaped to guide the cam follower at said open end of
15 the cam groove during engagement.

2. The cam mechanism according to claim 1, wherein at least one guide surface of said guide surfaces is oblique to the axis.

3. The cam mechanism according to claim 1,
20 wherein said guide surfaces are configured to guide the cam follower at the open end of the cam groove.

4. The cam mechanism according to claim 1, wherein said guide surfaces are configured to guide the cam follower to the cam groove when the cam follower has
25 moved out of the open end of the cam groove and has been

disengaged therefrom.

5 5. The cam mechanism according to any preceding claim, wherein said cam groove comprises a lead section which extends linearly in a direction inclined to said axis;

 wherein one of said guide surfaces comprises a beveled surface located on an end face of one of said cam ring and said support ring and is generally parallel to said lead section; and

10 wherein the other of said guide surfaces comprises at least one contacting portion located on the other of said cam ring and said support ring and configured to slidingly contact said beveled surface.

 6. The cam mechanism according to claim 5,
15 wherein said beveled surface is located on both said cam ring and said linearly movable member, respectively.

 7. The cam mechanism according to claim 1, further comprising a movement limiter configured to stop or limit disengagement of the cam follower from said open
20 end of the cam groove.

 8. The cam mechanism according to claim 1, wherein the cam mechanism is incorporated in a zoom lens.

 9. The cam mechanism according to claim 8, wherein said cam groove has a zooming section configured
25 to move said imaging component supported by said support

ring, and an accommodating section configured to accommodate said support ring in a retracted position thereof.

10. A cam mechanism for a lens barrel which
5 includes an imaging system, the mechanism comprising:

a linearly movable ring which supports an imaging element, having a cam follower, and guided linearly in an axis direction without rotating; and

a cam ring including a cam groove in which said cam
10 follower is engageable,

wherein said cam groove comprises:

an imaging control section configured to move said linearly movable ring to an imaging position in said axis direction; and

15 a standby section configured to move said linearly movable ring to a standby position different from said imaging position in said axis direction, one of opposite ends of said cam groove having an open end having a width greater than a width of said imaging control section such
20 that a portion of said cam groove including said open end serves as said standby section, and

wherein said cam ring and said linearly movable ring comprise a first leading portion and a second leading portion which are engageable with each other to press said
25 linearly movable ring in said axis direction to guide said

cam follower to said imaging control section from said standby section by a rotation of said cam ring, when said cam follower is in said standby section.

11. The cam mechanism according to claim 10,
5 wherein said cam groove comprises an inclined lead section which extends linearly in a direction inclined to said axis direction and connects said imaging control section with said standby section;

wherein said one of said first leading portion and
10 second leading portion includes at least one beveled surface located on an end face of one of said cam ring and said linearly movable ring and generally parallel to said inclined lead section of said cam groove; and

wherein the other of said first leading portion and
15 said second leading portion includes at least one contacting portion located on the other of said cam ring and said linearly movable ring and configured to slidably contact said beveled surface.

12. The cam mechanism according to claim 11,
20 wherein said beveled surface comprises a first beveled surface and a second beveled surface located on said cam ring and said linearly movable ring, respectively.

13. The cam mechanism according to claim 10,
wherein said cam ring and said linearly movable ring
25 comprise a movement limiter configured to limit movement

of said linearly movable ring relative to said cam ring
in a direction of disengaging said cam follower from said
cam groove through said open end in said standby section
when said cam follower is positioned in said standby
5 section.

14. The cam mechanism according to claim 10,
wherein said imaging system is a retractable zoom lens
which is retractable into a camera body;

wherein said imaging system includes a plurality of
10 optical elements including said imaging element;

wherein said imaging control section includes a
zooming section configured to move said imaging element,
which is supported by said linearly movable ring, in said
axis direction relative to another optical element
15 included in said plurality of optical elements in a
predetermined moving manner to change focal length; and,

wherein said standby section comprises an
accommodating section which accommodates said linearly
movable ring in a retracted position thereof when said
20 imaging system is retracted into said camera body.

15. A cam mechanism of an imaging system, the
mechanism comprising:

a linearly movable ring which supports an imaging
element, having a cam follower, and guided linearly in
25 an axis direction without rotating; and

a cam ring including a cam groove in which said cam follower is engageable, said linearly movable ring movable between an imaging position and a standby position due to engagement of said cam follower with said cam groove
5 when said cam ring rotates,

wherein one of opposite ends of said cam groove having an open end such that said cam follower is disengaged from said cam groove through said open end when said linearly movable ring is positioned in said standby
10 position, and

wherein said cam ring and said linearly movable ring comprise a first leading portion and a second leading portion which are engageable with each other to press said linearly movable ring in said axis direction to guide said
15 cam follower into said open end of said cam groove by a rotation of said cam ring, when said cam follower is disengaged from said cam groove through said open end.

16. The cam mechanism according to claim 15, wherein said cam groove comprises an inclined lead section
20 which extends linearly from said open end in a direction inclined to said axis direction;

wherein one of said first leading portion and said second leading portion includes at least one beveled surface located on an end face of one of said cam ring
25 and said linearly movable ring and generally parallel to

said inclined lead section of said cam groove; and

wherein the other of said first leading portion and
said second leading portion include at least one
contacting portion located on the other of said cam ring
5 and said linearly movable ring and configured to slidingly
contact said beveled surface.

17. The cam mechanism according to claim 16,
wherein said beveled surface comprises a first beveled
surface and a second beveled surface located on said cam
10 ring and said linearly movable ring, respectively.

18. The cam mechanism according to claim 15,
wherein said cam ring and said linearly movable ring
comprise a movement limiter configured to limit movement
of said linearly movable ring relative to said cam ring
15 in a direction of disengaging said cam follower from said
cam groove through said open end thereof when said cam
follower is disengaged from said cam groove through said
open end thereof.

19. The cam mechanism according to claim 15,
20 wherein said imaging system comprises a retractable zoom
lens which is retractable into a camera body; and

wherein said linearly movable ring is positioned in
said standby position when said imaging system is
retracted into said camera body.